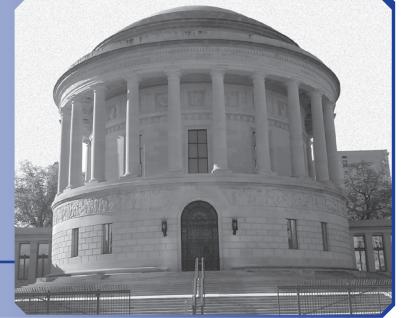




# Grand Lodge NEWSLETTER

*Elks Care — Elks Share*



## There is much to commemorate in May

In May, we have numerous programs to *Be The Difference*: National Youth Week, Mother's Day, Armed Forces Day, and Memorial Day.

The first week of the month, May 1-7, is Elks National Youth Week. Honor the youth in your community at the end of their school year.

A variety of certificates are available online, including ones for Student/Teenager of the Year/Month and the Elks JROTC Awards Program.

Happy Mother's Day to the important ladies in our lives. Mother's Day is Sunday, May 10. We need to extend our heartfelt thanks to all mothers. If possible, find a way to honor the mothers in your life and plan a Lodge activity to let them know



**Message from  
the Grand  
Exalted Ruler  
BRYAN R.  
KLATT**

how much they mean to us.

Many of us may not automatically think of Armed Forces Day, which honors those currently serving in the U.S. military, held this year on Saturday, May 16. It was designated as a day for the unification of the armed forces to be celebrated together instead of celebrating each branch

individually. God bless our troops who served throughout the history of our country.

Memorial Day is Monday, May 25. It is a wonderful time when we can recognize and commemorate the men and women of all services for their sacrifices and hard work that kept our country safe and prosperous.

Elks have a heart for remembering our departed service members by attending or participating in a Memorial Day parade, working at a cemetery ceremony, assisting in putting flags at service members' graves, or planning a memorial ceremony at your Lodge.

Always remember to *Be The Difference* by promoting "*Elks Care—Elks Share.*"

## Off and running

As Lodge Officers, your responsibility is to plan your work, execute it effectively, and ensure steady progress.

**GRAND SECRETARY**  
Carl T. Seibert

One month in, I trust you are well underway and supported, with a clear focus on strong membership growth and a successful year for your Lodge and community.

The Grand Lodge supports Exalted Rulers and Secretaries by providing extended access to resources on [elks.org](http://elks.org).

Log in, navigate to the Members Only tab, and select Extended Access, Member Resources.

From there, choose either Exalted Rulers or Secretaries to find a wide range of helpful information.

### Grand Lodge Convention Pre-Registration Now Open

Online pre-registration for the Grand Lodge Convention in Chicago is now open on [elks.org](http://elks.org) and will remain available through late June.

Please see **SECRETARY**, Page 2

## GRAND LODGE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE

### Monthly charity reporting remains vital

By JOHN C. LOFTUS  
Committee Member

I think that we can all agree that capturing and compiling the details of our charitable works can be time consuming, even tedious. However, there are many reasons it's important and needs monthly reporting. One is that it helps maintain our IRS designation as a tax-exempt fraternal organization. Another is that sharing this information can help build a positive image for our Order and your Lodge. It also gives us standing as we interact with town, city, county, state, and even federal agencies.

It doesn't have to be complicated! Charitable activities are occurring all around us: Veterans programs such as dinners, parades, field trips, home visitations, and more. Youth Activities like the Hoop Shoot, Soccer Shoot, Americanism, Drug Awareness, scholarships, golf tournaments, Coats for Kids. Providing Thanksgiving or Christmas dinners to needy families, collaborating with other

community-based organizations like humane societies, sponsoring an "adopt a pet" event, and Lodge contributions to your community. As you can see, your imagination is the only limit! Volunteer hours, charitable mileage, cash, and non-cash contributions all count.

Tracking down all this information and entering it into the CLMS database every month takes some time and effort, but it is well worth it. Because our Lodge Secretaries manage so many responsibilities, our Statutes provide that the Secretary can have an assistant specifically to help with charity reporting! (Section 12.050, (q))

Section 13.020 requires that the Exalted Ruler appoint at least three members to the Government Relations Committee. Capturing charitable activity gives this committee a valuable arrow in their quiver when representing the interest of your Lodge in the public square.

In the words of our Grand Exalted Ruler Bryan Klatt, "*Be The Difference!*"

**GRAND LODGE FRATERNAL COMMITTEE**

# Honoring Elkdom's legacy through state bulletins

By **THOMAS FRAKER**  
Committee Member

The value of traditional communication continues to shine brightly within our Order, and this year's participation in Contest I – State Bulletin Contest is a testament to that commitment.

A sincere salute goes out to the 18 State Associations that submitted entries. With over one third of all State Associations taking part, this level of engagement underscores the importance of the state bulletin in preserving and sharing the story of Elkdom. Each state that entered contributed work that reflects both pride and purpose.

These bulletins captured the rhythm of our Order—documenting major events, celebrating the achievements of individual Members, and highlighting the many ways Elks continue to serve their communities.

These publications safeguard our heritage, reinforce our values, and inspire the next generation of Elks to carry our

5 Star Awards		4 Star Awards	
State	Editor	State	Editor
Florida	Rachael King	Arizona	Megin L. Goetz
Georgia	Linda Lewis	Colorado	Sandy Bassett
Illinois	Elizabeth Conaway	Connecticut	Donna Borzillo
Kansas	Carl E. Lindsey, Jr.	Louisiana	Brian L. Baye
MD-DE-DC	Jane L. Swigert	North Carolina	Ashley Buckwell
Michigan	Jean Chapdelaine	Utah	Steffanee Wanlass
Missouri	Joy Clarkson		
New Jersey	Richard Poole	3 Star Awards	
New York	Timothy R. Welpé	State	Editor
Pennsylvania	Jason L. Cook	Oregon	C. Blake Whitson
Washington	Jennifer Steele		

mission forward.

What stood out across all submissions was the dedication and craftsmanship of the editors and contributors. Their creativity, attention to detail, and commitment to the Elks' mission were evident in every issue. Through their efforts, they strengthen the bonds within our organization and encourage others to participate, volunteer,

and make a meaningful impact.

Judging for Contest I was conducted across four key areas: Content, Layout & Typography, Pictorial, and General.

We extend our appreciation to all participating State Associations—and especially to the editors—whose time, talent, and passion keep this tradition thriving.

**SECRETARY** From Page 1

Pre-registration is \$70 for Members and on-site registration is \$80.

A valid credit card is required for PayPal processing.

Non-Elk spouses and guests may register at no charge.

To obtain your badge and, if applicable, voting credentials, proceed to the Convention Center registration area.

Please bring your email confirmation and current membership card. A badge is required for entry into the exhibit hall and all business sessions.

Grand Lodge registration and associated fees are not included in any State Association package. Registration is available exclusively online at [elks.org](http://elks.org) or onsite in Chicago.

For the latest information on the Chicago Convention and the Elks National Memorial, visit [elks.org/convention](http://elks.org/convention).

**VETERANS** From Page 4

A local mattress company gives them a discount on queen-sized beds for veterans without anywhere to sleep.

Volunteers then complete a final report, complete with all receipts, which is handed off to the Members who handle paperwork. Then, the supplies are given to the volunteers charged with kit deliveries, and the veteran gets supplies!

Volunteers have a clear plan established with the Lodge leadership to handle kit funds and reimbursements.

Once submitted, kit reimbursement forms are reviewed, and checks are mailed to Lodges each week from the ENVSC office, although there may be a lag on

reimbursement funds arriving at the Lodge address, depending on the mail.

Along the way, Lodge No. 735 has not only streamlined the process for but added a few special touches.

The Lodge encouraged more Members to get involved by starting an Angel Tree to gather supplies for kits, including gifts for the children of veterans who received kits.

One Lodge Member puts his talents to use making wooden flag stands for each veteran, with an American flag and their service branch flag.

Of course, every Lodge does things a bit differently. The most important thing is that veterans know they can count on the Elks for support when they need it.

**ACTIVITIES** From Page 4

If not, see whether local principals and superintendents would like to get involved. Don't forget about private schools, too.

Thousands of young people earn Gold Award and Eagle Scout status each year. Your Lodge can present the GER's certificate of recognition to these worthy scouts.

If this didn't happen, contact the local

Scouting council and get connected.

These are only some of the many programs available. Additionally, there are a multitude of scholarships that are made available through ENF.

Your Lodge's Activities Committee and its programs are a direct connection to your community. Take the time to see where improvements can be made or new programs added. Be active. Be proud. *Be The Difference.*



## DRUG AWARENESS PROGRAM

# Convention is just around the corner

By **FRANK J. BURR**  
Drug Awareness Program

May is a very busy month for the DAP. Efforts are currently underway for our annual DAP State Chair's training. This two-day training takes place the Saturday and Sunday prior to the opening of the Grand Lodge Convention. This year the training will be held in Chicago, the home of the Elks.

We will also be hosting an Open House Session on the Tuesday of the Convention. The highlight of this hour-and-a-half session will be the presentation of the 2025-2026 Enrique S. Camarena Award, given annually to a law enforcement officer who has gone above and beyond the call of duty to make their community a better and safer place to live.

May is also the observance of National Prevention Week. Your Lodge can help raise awareness about substance use and positive mental health by hosting prevention events and sharing promotional

materials to connect your community with National Prevention Week.

Have you had a chance to visit the DAP YouTube channel and see Season 5 of *Awkward Conversations*? If not, why not take a look?

In addition to great information provided to parents, guardians, and grandparents, with a variety of drug education topics, many of the episodes are accompanied by short "explainer" videos.

These animated shorts help kids recognize various scenarios they face at home, in schools, and in their communities. These podcasts give caring adults the tools they need to raise happy, healthy, substance-free kids—by turning tough topics into open, connected conversations. Check them out. Everyone can learn from these videos.

Lastly, if you plan to attend the Grand Lodge Convention in Chicago, please stop by the DAP booth for a picture with Elroy and a few other surprises.

## GRAND LODGE FRATERNAL COMMITTEE

# Americanism contest theme announced

By **MARK EATON**  
Committee Member

It's time to announce the Americanism Essay Contest theme, "*Explain a Constitutional Right or Privilege and how it affects you and your family.*"

The rights and privileges are the same for everyone, but impacts people in many ways. We would like the students to pick just one way that a right or privilege affects them and their family.

The rules and prizes have not changed since last year. Contest materials, including the annual contest theme, are published online on May 1. Lodges are encouraged to communicate with school officials to facilitate annual curriculum planning. Contest materials and a fillable Certificate of Participation for Lodge completion are located at [elks.org/grandlodge/fraternal/downloads.cfm](https://elks.org/grandlodge/fraternal/downloads.cfm).

A question we get quite often is, "Do we check for AI?" The answer is yes! We give 30 points for originality. Anyone using AI will not get those points, making it impossible to get a competing score.

We need all participating Lodges to

ensure that the information turned in is correct, starting with phone numbers, emails, and addresses.

Also, each Lodge should send the number of essays entered to their district or state chairperson. This gives us important information on how many children participated. The state chairperson will pass that information on.

The features introduced to the contest three years ago continue:

**1) Four separate divisions for 5th, 6th, 7th & 8th grade students**

**2) Nationally, there is a \$1,000 award for 1st place; \$500 for 2nd; \$250 for 3rd.**

Many Lodges, Districts, and State Associations also provide various forms of recognition to their respective winners.

This contest is vitally important to Elks as it encourages students to thoughtfully consider American values and appreciate the blessings and responsibilities of citizenship.

The Grand Lodge Fraternal Committee is committed to assisting you in promoting Americanism. Please let us know what we can do to be more helpful!

## G/L PR AND MEMBERSHIP MARKETING COMMITTEE

# Lodges need good customer service

By **RICK GATHEN**  
Membership Marketing Director

Every Elk understands the things that make a Lodge feel welcoming, proud, and energized. It has little to do with money or facilities.

It is how Members are treated with warmth and respect.

It is how we welcome new Members, retain longtime Elks, reconnect those drifting away, and remind every Member why they chose to belong.

When Lodges fail to practice good customer service, Members can gradually drift away because of missed connections, unanswered calls, or unreturned emails. Frequent guests might simply never be invited to join, and Members who fall behind on paying dues might never hear from the Lodge.

Effective exterior visibility, interior signage, and digital displays all tell our story before anyone speaks.

This also applies to a Lodge's digital front door. Websites and social media platforms can answer questions, reduce friction, and make people feel welcome before they ever walk through the door.

When we clearly showcase our community involvement and charitable work in our Lodges and online, pride grows and recruitment follows.

Strong customer service begins with Lodge leadership. Exalted Rulers and other Elks in leadership positions need to lead with intention, consistency, and pride, and create environments where guests feel welcome, Members feel valued, and communities clearly understand who we are and what we stand for.

## Celebrate Elkdom with the Cubs and White Sox!

Elks Night at Wrigley Field will be Saturday, July 4, at 7:08 p.m. as the Chicago Cubs face the St. Louis Cardinals.

Elks Night at Rate Field will be Tuesday, July 7, at 6:40 p.m. as the Chicago White Sox take on the Boston Red Sox.

Tickets will be limited so early planning is encouraged. Watch [elks.org/elksday](https://elks.org/elksday) for updates. **GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!**

# Lodge shares advice for Welcome Home Kits

By **MARY MORGAN**  
Program Director

Started in 2016, the Welcome Home Kit program has grown steadily, both with new Lodges joining in and longtime participants increasing their outreach. Raleigh, NC Lodge No. 735 began participating in 2022 and has since served more than 334 veterans through the program!

Raleigh had advice for Lodges looking to get started. Here, they share their tips for providing Welcome Home Kits while being efficient, thoughtful, and productive.

The Lodge recommends establishing a

Welcome Home Kit Committee with at least six Members and clearly established roles.

Raleigh has two organized Members who take referrals, track kits provided, and handle paperwork submitted to the ENVSC.

They recommend assigning three volunteers to shopping, ideally people skilled at budget shopping, as well as at least two active Members to help with kit deliveries.

Raleigh established a shared email to keep track of veteran referrals, which come from the VA and several local

nonprofits. They also keep a shared Google Drive, with names, dates, and kit ID numbers.

Once a referral is received, the veteran completes the Welcome Home Kit checklist Raleigh put together, indicating items they need for their new home.

When the Elks receive the list, the shoppers take charge! Volunteers keep a list of recommendations on where to buy commonly requested items, to help find items at the best price.



Please see **VETERANS**, Page 2

Carl T. Seibert, Grand Secretary  
**Benevolent and Protective  
ORDER OF ELKS**  
2750 N. Lakeview Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60614-1889

**May 2026**

**NON-PROFIT ORG.**  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
CHICAGO, IL  
Permit No. 5244

## GRAND LODGE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

# Lodges should review, update youth programming

By **RICHARD W. THREADGILL**  
Committee Member

With Elks National Youth Week upon us, now is a great time for your Lodge's Activities Committee to review all youth programs the Lodge operates and explore opportunities to start new ones. We hope your Lodge hosted a banquet, luncheon, or other public ceremony to celebrate the great achievements of the young people in your community.

Maybe your Lodge presented a Student/ Teenager of the Year award. This is one of

the easiest, lowest-cost programs available. It could also have the greatest impact on a student's future career. If your Lodge hasn't done this, consider reaching out to local high school principals and start building a pool of candidates so you can participate next year.

Lodges can also present the Elks JROTC award. This is a high honor award focused on recognizing a young cadet's community service and academic achievements, culminating with a medal and ribbon bar. Contact a local JROTC instructor to get started.

Your Lodge likely held a Hoop Shoot and a Soccer Shoot. They are both fun to run and the kids who participate in them embrace the competition and camaraderie with their peers. If your Lodge didn't, contact your district chairperson or consider partnering with a neighboring Lodge.

With our country celebrating 250 years, hopefully your Lodge participated in the Americanism Essay Contest. Be sure to recognize these students for their creative writing and patriotic passion.

Please see **ACTIVITIES**, Page 2